

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

PRIMARY SOURCE QUOTES

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Short, interesting, easily remembered, and of course significant primary source quotes are always of great value when studying VCE Revolutions. A good 'one-liner' can really make a key point in an essay come alive or provide the beginnings of an animated discussion during class. Good quotes provide a basis for examining the impact and views of important events. They can succinctly reveal the attitudes of history's protagonists and they can amuse us with their seemingly silly or naïve views (the advice of Tsarina Alexandra to Nicholas II comes to mind). They can also provide an immediate 'shock factor' in illustrating the violent callousness of the Revolution ('Iron' Felix Dzerzhinsky and his Cheka buddies have left a treasure trove of these). The following collection of quotes first came about, as a collection that is, almost by accident late 2003. To help my own students revise for the exam, I started typing up the primary source quotes that I'd used throughout the year in class and as I continued collating and playing with their order, I noticed that the quotes – taken just by themselves – made for a really good summary of the Russian Revolution. History's 'actors' were telling the story in their own words. I've since added a few (a lot actually!) and consciously worked on trying to structure the quotes more like a conversation. As you read through them, try to recall and cross-reference what is being said to the events and issues you are studying. Note when key figures react differently or in a similar manner to events and the reasons behind such views. Consider too what views may have been left out: the quotes are those that I have personally selected, edited and arranged in a purposeful manner; they are not by any means all the 'voices' of the Revolution.

Tsarist Russia in Crisis 1905 - 1917

Tsar Alexander III: "Listen to Witte" (to Nicholas).

Tsar Nicholas II: "What is going to happen to me and all of Russia? I am not prepared to be a Tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling" (Nicholas talking to his cousin after the death of his father, Tsar Alexander III).

Tsarina Alexandra: "Be more autocratic than Peter the Great and sterner than Ivan the Terrible" (to Nicholas).

Nicholas II: "I will preserve the principle of Autocracy as firmly and unflinchingly as my late father."

Count Sergei Witte: "I pity the Tsar. I pity Russia. He is a poor and unhappy sovereign. What did he inherit and what will he leave? He is obviously a good and quite intelligent man, but he lacks will power, and it is from that character that his state defects developed, that is, his defects as a ruler, especially an autocratic and absolute ruler."

Unknown government minister: "Unfit to run a village post office" (describing Tsar Nicholas II).

Tsarina Alexandra: "I am fully convinced that great and beautiful times are coming for your reign and Russia...we must give a strong country to Baby and dare not be weak for his sake...Don't let things slip through your fingers and leave it to him to build all over again. Be firm...How I wish I could pour my will into your veins" (to Nicholas II).

Nicolai Tolstoy: “Autocracy is a superannuated form of government that may suit the needs of a Central African tribe, but not those of the Russian people, who are increasingly assimilating the culture of the rest of the world. That is why it is impossible to maintain this form of government except by violence.”

Nicholas II: “Those who believe they can share in government dream senseless dreams.”

Witte: “Your Majesty has 130 million subjects. Of them, barely more than half live, the rest vegetate” (*describing life in the Russian countryside, 1898*).

Plehve: “We need a short, victorious war to avert a revolution” (*although this statement was attributed to him by Witte, his rival*).

Nicholas II: “The Japanese are infidels. The might of Holy Russia will crush them.”

Admiral Alexeieff: “Have no fear, Port Arthur is impregnable. It can never be taken” (*Commander in Chief of Russia’s armed forces during the Russo-Japanese War*).

Russian soldier: “The Japanese are giving it to us with shells; we’re giving it to them with icons” (*1905*).

Father George Gapon:

- “We working men of St Petersburg, our wives and children, our parents, helpless, aged men and women have come to you, O Tsar, in quest of justice and protection.”
- “There is no God any longer. There is no Tsar” (*after Bloody Sunday*).
- “Comrade Workers, tear up all portraits of the blood-sucking Tsar and say to him: Be Thou damned with all Thine August Reptilian Progeny!”

Dowager Empress Marie Fedorovna: “I’m sure that the only man who can help you now and be useful is Witte” (*the mother of Tsar Nicholas II giving advice, October 16th*).

Nicholas II: “Rioting and disturbances in the capitals and in many localities of Our Empire fill Our heart with great and heavy grief. The well-being of the Russian Sovereign is inseparable from the national well-being; and the national sorrow is His sorrow” (*on the October Manifesto*).

Witte: “I have a constitution in my head, but as to my heart, I spit on it.”

Nicholas II: “Curse the Duma. It’s all Witte’s fault.”

Witte: “The tragic aspect of the situation is that the Tsar is living in an utter fool’s paradise, thinking that He is as strong and all-powerful as before” (*October 1st, 1905*).

Nicholas II: “As long as I live, I will never trust that man (*Witte*) again with the smallest thing. I had quite enough with last year’s experiment. It is still like a nightmare to me” (*November, 1906*).

Tsar Nicholas II: “The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority” (*the Fundamental Laws of 1906*).

Popular song (1906)

“The tsar caught fright, issued a Manifest:
Liberty for the dead, for the living – arrest.”

Pytor Stolypin: “Suppression first, and then, and only then, reform.”

Nicholas II: “I cannot tell you how much I have come to like and respect this man!” (*on Stolypin*).

Stolypin: “I must carry through effective measures of reform, and at the same time I must face the revolution, resist it and stop it.”

Leon Trotsky: “We have been given a constitution, but absolutism remains.”

Tsar Nicholas II: “I shall never, under any circumstances, agree to a representative form of government because I consider it harmful to the people whom God has entrusted to my care.”

Stolypin:

- “There is no limit to the assistance I am ready to give and the concessions I am willing to make to put the peasantry on the path of cultural development. If we fail to carry out this reform we should all be swept on to the rubbish heap.”
- “First of all, we have to create a citizen, a small landowner, and then the peasant problem will be solved.”
- “The government has placed its wager, not on the needy and the drunken, but on the sturdy and the strong” (*on agrarian reform, 1908*).

Vladimir Lenin: “An era of counter-revolution has begun; and it will last some twenty years, unless tsardom is in meantime shaken by a major war.”

General Brusilov: “In a year of war the regular army had vanished. It was replaced by an army of ignoramuses.”

Grand Duke Nikolai: “I have no rifles, no shells, no boots” (*Commander-In-Chief of the Russian army commenting on inadequate supplies to troops at the start of WWI*).

Russian Officer: “This is not war, sir, it is slaughter. The Germans use up shells; we use up human lives” (*complaint submitted to superiors*).

Aleksei Polivanov: “The army is no longer retreating but simply fleeing...Headquarters has completely lost its head. Contradictory orders, absence of a plan, feverish changes of commanding officers, and general confusion upset even the most courageous men” (*Minister of War, August 1915*).

General Danilov: “The effectives of the army were melting, the lack of officers was taking alarming proportions” (*the Russian Quartermaster-General*).

General Brusilov: “Our army is more like an ill-trained militia...such men could not be called soldiers.”

Grigory Rasputin: “Let papa (*Nicholas II*) not plan war. It will be the end of Russia and all of us. We shall be destroyed to the last man.”

Nicholas II: “We have got to know a man of God – Grigory – from the Tobolsk province.”

Rasputin: “The tsar can change his mind from one minute to the next; he’s a sad man; he lacks guts.”

Nicholas II: “He is just a good, religious, simple-minded Russian. When in trouble or assailed by doubts I like to have a talk with him, and invariably feel at peace with myself afterwards” (*on Rasputin*).

Tsarina Alexandra: “I must give you over a message from our Friend, prompted by what He saw in the night” (*letter to Nicholas urging action based on Rasputin’s ‘visions’*).

Nicholas II: “Our Friend’s opinions of people are sometimes very strange, as you know yourself – therefore one must be careful” (*dismissing advice from Alexandra*).

Rodzianko: “The appearance in Court of Grigory Rasputin, and the influence he exercised there, mark the beginning of the decay of Russian society and the loss of prestige for the throne and for the person of the Tsar himself.”

Tsar Nicholas II: “Better one Rasputin than ten fits of hysterics every day” (*in relation to the calming influence of Rasputin over his wife*).

Rasputin: “I wish to make known to the Russian people, to Papa, the Russian Mother and to the Children, to the land of Russia, what they must understand. If I am killed by common assassins, and especially by my brothers the Russian peasants, you, Tsar of Russia, have nothing to fear, remain on your throne and govern...but if I am murdered by boyars, nobles and if they shed my blood, their hands will remain soiled with my blood, for twenty-five years they will not wash their hands from my blood. They will leave Russia. Brothers will kill brothers...if it was your relations who have wrought my death then no one of your family, that is to say none of your children or relations, will remain alive for more than two years.”

Mikhail Rodzianko: “The country has everything it needs but cannot make adequate use of it” (*criticizing the government’s inadequate response to transport and supply management*).

Tsar Nicholas II: “Rodzianko is meddling in matters that are none of his business” (*criticizing members of the Duma working with the zemstvos in trying to improve supplies to the troops*).

Rodzianko: “The people must interpret your move as one inspired by the Germans around you, who are identified in the minds of the people with our enemies and with treason to the Russian cause” (*urging the Tsar not to assume supreme command of the military in August 1915*).

Pavel Miliukov: “When the Duma with ever greater persistence insists that the rear must be organised for a successful struggle, while the government persists in claiming that organising the country means organising a revolution and deliberately prefers chaos and disorganization, then what is this: stupidity or treason?” (*speech to the Duma, November 1916*).

Vasili Shulgin: “Oh, how terrible an autocracy is without an autocrat! The Tsar offends the nation by what he allows to go on in the palace” (*a loyalist view of the Rasputin scandal*).

Nicholas II: “Think, my wifey, will you not come to the assistance of your hubby now that he is absent?”

Tsarina Alexandra: “Lovey, I am your wall in the rear. I am here, don’t laugh at old wifey, but she has ‘trousers’ on unseen.”

Maurice Paleologue: “I am obliged to report that, at the present moment, the Russian Empire is run by lunatics” (*the French Ambassador*).

Grand Duke Nikolai: “It is now a reign of chaos.”

Aleksandr Guchkov: “A deluge is approaching and a pitiful, wretched and flabby Government is preparing to face that cataclysm by taking measures only good enough to protect oneself from a shower. It puts on galoshes and opens an umbrella!” (*Octobrist Duma minister*).

Prince Shcherbatov: “The government enjoys the confidence neither of the Sovereign, nor the army, nor the towns, nor the zemstvos, nor the nobility, nor the merchants, nor the working men – such a government cannot perform its duties or even exist” (*Minister for the Navy*).

Grand Duke Alexander: “We are watching an unwonted spectacle, revolution coming from above and not from below.”

Tsarina Alexandra: “My poor Nicky’s cross is heavy, all the more so as he has nobody on whom he can thoroughly rely.”

Rodzianko: “Situation serious. There is anarchy in the capital. Government paralysed. Transport of food and fuel completely disorganized. Public disaffection growing. On the streets chaotic shooting. Army units fire at each other. It is essential at once to entrust a person enjoying the country’s confidence with the formation of a new government. There should be no delay. All delay is death” (*on the February protests*).

Nicholas II: “That fat Rodzianko has again sent me some nonsense to which I will not even reply” (*reacting to news of mass protests in Petrograd*).

Tsarina Alexandra: “This is a hooligan movement, young people run and shout that there is no bread, simply to create excitement, along with workers who prevent others from working. If the weather were very cold they would probably all stay at home. But all this will pass and become calm if only the Duma will behave itself” (*dismissing the start of the February Revolution*).

Lenin: “We old-timers perhaps shall not live to see the decisive battles of the looming revolution in our time.”

Nicholas II: “Is it possible that for twenty-two years I have tried to act for the best, and for twenty-two years it was all a mistake?”

Rodzianko: “Yes, your Majesty, for twenty-two years you have followed a wrong course.”

Nicholas II: “If it is necessary, for Russia’s good, that I step aside, I am prepared to do so.”

Lenin: “A giant petty-bourgeois wave has swept over everything and has overwhelmed the class-conscious proletariat” (*on the February Revolution*).

Guchkov: “Literally no one tried to block us, literally no one supported the tsar...Total emptiness surrounded the throne”.

Lenin: “It is necessary to prepare men who devote to the Revolution, not only their free evenings, but their entire lives.”

Decline of the Provisional Government and the October Revolution

Aleksandr Kerensky: “The Old Regime has left everything in chaos.”

Guchkov: “The Provisional Government does not possess any real power.”

Kerensky: “The Soviets had power without authority...the Provisional Government authority without power.”

‘Soviet Order No.1’: “The orders of the military commission of the state Duma are to be obeyed only in such instances when they do not contradict the orders and decrees of the Soviet.”

Guchkov: “The Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies...enjoys all the elements of real power, since the troops, the railways, the post and telegraph are in its hands. One can say flatly that the Provisional Government exists only so long as it is permitted by the Soviet” (*the Provisional Government Minister of War*).

Yuri Martov: “The more widely the title of ‘member of the party’ is spread, the better. We can only rejoice if every striker, every demonstrator, is able to declare himself a party member.”

Lenin: “It is better that ten real workers should not call themselves party members than that one chatterbox should have the right and opportunity to be a member.”

George Plekhanov: “This is the stuff of which the Robespierres are made.”

Victor Chernov: “His is a sort of uncouth socialism, for Lenin employs a clumsy axe where a fine scalpel is called for.”

Lenin:

- “Have done with these greetings and resolutions! It’s time to get down to business” (*meeting fellow Social Democrats at the Finland Station, April 1917*).
- “We are not doctrinaires. Our theory is a guide to action, not a dogma. We do not claim that Marx knew or Marxists know the road to socialism down to the last detail. It would be nonsense to claim anything of the kind.”
- “Our tactics: absolute distrust, no support for the Provisional Government.”
- “Peace! Bread! Land!”

Bogdanov: “It is obscene to applaud such rubbish. These are the ravings of a lunatic” (*a Menshevik reaction to Lenin’s ‘April Theses’*).

Lenin: “Are you afraid to go back on your old memories? But to change our linen, we have got to take off the old dirty shirt and put on a clean one.”

Chernov: “At that time Lenin remarked ironically that he knew of only two real Bolsheviks: himself and his wife.”

Sukhanov: “Lenin’s remarks resounded like a thunderbolt from a clear blue sky...it stunned and confused even the most faithful of his disciples.”

Skobelev: “Lenin is a has-been” (*a Menshevik assessment of Lenin’s influence given to Prince L’vov, April 1917*).

Lenin: “Turning the present imperialist war into a civil war is the only correct proletarian slogan.”

Kerensky: “For the sake of the nations life it was necessary to restore the army’s will to die” (*on the June offensive*).

Chernov: “Without an offence, there is no defence.”

Kerensky: “Forward to the battle for freedom. I summon you not to a feast but death” (*rousing Russian troops June, 1917*).

Lenin: “We summon you to a social revolution. We appeal to you not to die for others but to destroy others, to destroy your enemies on the home front.”

Maxim Gorky: “Only the ‘Bolsheviks’ marched. *I despise and hate them more and more.* They are truly Russian idiots” (June, 1917).

Unknown protester during the ‘July Days’: “Take power, you son of a bitch when they give it to you!” (*directed at SR, Victor Chernov*).

Prince L’vov: “The only way to save the country now is to close down the Soviet and shoot the people. I cannot do that. But Kerensky can” (July 9th, 1917).

Vasili Shulgin: “Only Kerensky knew how to dance upon the revolutionary quagmire.”

Kerensky: “I am sent by the Revolution!”

General Kornilov: “It’s time to hang the German supporters and spies, with Lenin at their head, and to disperse the Soviet.”

Kerensky: “I want to take the middle road, but nobody will help me.”

Lenin: “There is no middle course.”

A. Kuchlakov: “For we received a stone instead of bread, and instead of the promised rain we got a hail of steel bullets that knocked down a tenth part of the country and infected the rest with malice, envy, and hatred. Now another Savior of the world must be born, to save the people from all the calamities in the making here on earth and to put an end to these bloody days” (*Russian soldier, August 1917*).

Lenin: “To treat the insurrection in an Marxist manner, that is like an art, we must without waiting a minute organise a staff of the insurgent detachments, distribute forces, move reliable regiments to the most important points” (15th September).

Lev Kamenev: “Before history, before the international proletariat, before the Russian Revolution and the Russian working class, we have no right to stake the whole future on the card of an armed uprising.”

Kerensky: “If only they (*the Bolsheviks*) would come out, and then I will put them down.”

Leon Trotsky: “Kerensky is on the offensive” (October 23rd 1917).

Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko: “To work! Our leader is with us! Full speed ahead!” (*member of the Milrevcom and leader of the assault on the Winter Palace, on the arrival of Lenin at the Smolny*).

Lenin:

- “History will not forgive us if we do not assume power now.”
- “If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their behalf.”
- “No revolution ever waits for formal majority.”
- “All Power to the Soviets!”

Trotsky: “The will of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets has been predetermined by the enormous feat of the uprising of Petrograd workers and soldiers which occurred last night.”

Kuchin: “The congress was called to primarily discuss the question of forming a new government, and yet what do we see? We find that an irresponsible seizure of power has already occurred and that the will of the congress had been decided beforehand...We must save the revolution from this mad venture” (*a Menshevik delegate to the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets*).

Trotsky: “A rising of the masses requires no justification. What has happened is an insurrection, and not a conspiracy. We hardened the revolutionary energy of the Petersburg workers and soldiers. We openly forged the will of the masses for an insurrection, and not a conspiracy. The masses followed our banner and our insurrection was victorious. And now we are told: Renounce your victory, make concessions, compromise. With whom I ask?...No, here no compromise is possible. To those who have left and those who tell us to do this we must say: You are miserable bankrupts, your role is played out; go back where you ought to go: into the dustbin of history!” (*to the Mensheviks, Martov in particular*).

‘Narodnoye Slovo’: “*Workers’ and Peasants’ Government?* That is only a pipe-dream; nobody...will recognize this *Government*” (*populist socialist newspaper*).

‘Dielo Naroda’: “A revolution is a rising of the people...But here what have we? Nothing but a handful of poor fools deceived by Lenin and Trotsky...Their decrees and their appeals will simply add to the museum of historical curiosities” (*SR newspaper*).

Maslov: “Contempt and damnation to the democracy which knew how to appoint us but was unable to defend us!” (*the Provisional Government Minister for Agriculture*).

Stalin: “The entire labour of practical organisation of the insurrection was placed under the immediate direction of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It can be stated with certainty, that the party owes the rapid coming over of the garrison into the camp of the soviets and the skillful work of the Revolutionary Military Committee above all, and essentially to Comrade Trotsky” (*in Pravda, November 6th 1917*).

Russia under Lenin and the Bolsheviks 1917 - 1924

Gorky: “Lenin and his comrades-in-arms think they can commit any crime, like the massacre at Petrograd, the storming of Moscow, abolition of freedom of speech, the senseless arrests – all the abominations that used to be committed by Plehve and Stolypin” (*November, 1917*).

Trotsky: “Our grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and fathers all had to cleanup the shit and filth of your grandfathers and fathers. Now you are going to do the same thing for us.”

Plekhanov: “The Bolshevik bandits are a revolting mixture of Utopian idealists, imbeciles, traitors and anarchist provocateurs.”

Trotsky: “The characteristic of bourgeois governments is to deceive the people. We, the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies, are going to try an experiment unique in history; we are going to found a power which will have no other aim but to satisfy the needs of the soldiers, workers and peasants.”

Schneider: “If one recognizes a Government by bayonet, well, we have one; but I consider legitimate only a Government recognized by the people, by a majority, and not one created by the usurpation of a minority!” (*the former Petrograd Mayor*).

Trotsky: “If you do not succeed in barring the path to drunken excess, all you will have left in the way of defenses will be the armored cars. Each day of drunkenness brings the other side closer to victory and us to the old slavery.”

Antonov-Ovseenko: “A wild and unexampled orgy spread over Petrograd...We tried to stop them by walling up the entrances. The crowd penetrated through the windows,

forced out the bars and grabbed the stocks. An attempt was made to flood the cellars with water. The fire brigade sent to do this themselves got drunk...The whole city was infected by the drinking madness. At last the Council of People's Commissars appointed a special commissar, endowed him with emergency powers, and gave him a strong escort. But the commissar, too, proved unreliable...Only after an intense effort was this alcoholic lunacy overcome."

Gorky: "...a pogrom of greed, hatred and vengeance" (*on the post-revolution anarchy*).

Lenin: "You are the power – do all you want, take all you want. We shall support you" (*to a delegation of workers, late 1917*).

Trotsky: "There is nothing immoral in the proletariat finishing off a class that is collapsing: that is its right."

Lenin: "Loot the Looters!"

Putilov factory workers: "The power is in your hands, don't make yourselves enemies of the people. Requisition footwear and clothing and food reserves from the rich" (*letter to Central Executive Committee of Soviets, December 1917*).

Lenin: "We will turn Russia upside down."

Gorky: "I am especially distrustful of a Russian when he gets power into his hands. Not long ago a slave, he becomes the most unbridled despot as soon as he has the chance to become his neighbor's master."

Bukharin: "Is what you want a miserable little bourgeois republic? In the name of the great Soviet republic of labour we declare war to the death on such a government!" (*to the Right SR and Menshevik delegates of the Constituent Assembly*).

'Pravda': "Today the Hyenas of the Capital and their hirelings want to seize power from Soviet hands" (*on the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly*).

Victor Serge: "The politicians of the democratic counter-revolution trembled before the masses" (*justifying the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly*).

Lenin:

- "The town cannot be equal to the country...the town inevitably leads the country" (*on the results of the Constituent Assembly*).
- "The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the Soviet Government means a complete and frank liquidation of the idea of democracy by the idea of dictatorship."
- "Only scoundrels and imbeciles can think that the proletariat must win a majority of votes in elections."
- "The toiling masses have become convinced by their experience that bourgeois parliamentarianism is outdated; that it is completely incompatible with the construction of socialism."
- "To hand over power to the Constituent Assembly would again be compromising with the malignant bourgeoisie."
- "Naturally, the interests of this Revolution stand higher than the formal rights of the Constituent Assembly."
- "Trust in the mood, but don't forget your rifles."

Unknown Petrograd Soldier: "Bastard! What the hell are you doing? How long are you going to keep on degrading the Russian people?...You are deceivers!" (*letter to Lenin, 6th January 1918*).

Lenin: "We will not exchange our rifles for a ballot."

Trotsky: “Lenin’s theoretical considerations went hand in hand with the use of sharpshooters.”

Unknown: “To Citizen Trotsky, I am sending you a New Year’s greeting from the whole of the Russian people. God damn you to hell! The blood of these innocent victims cries out to God! What did the worker-demonstrators who were marching peacefully today down Petrograd’s streets ever do to you? Why did you fire on them?” (*anonymous letter to Trotsky, 5th January 1918*).

Yakov Sverdlov: “You understand, comrade, that it is difficult to give you instructions any more concrete than ‘All Power to the Soviets!’ This is apparently all that can be said” (*secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets replying to a request for instructions from provincial Bolshevik activists, early 1918*).

Lenin: “Can a worker administer the state? Practical people know that this is a fantasy!”

Trotsky: “What sort of diplomatic work will we be doing anyway? I shall issue a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples and then shut up shop” (*comment to a friend upon hearing of his appointment as Commissar of Foreign Affairs*).

Field Marshall Hindenberg: “Trotsky degraded the conference-table to the level of a tub-thumper’s street corner” (*on the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk*).

Trotsky: “Neither peace, nor war.”

Lenin: “It is a fact that at the moment when the army at the front, being in no condition to fight, is fleeing in panic, abandoning its guns and not even stopping to blow up bridges, the defence of the fatherland and the raising of its defence capacity lie not in babbling about a revolutionary war...but in retreating in good order, so as to save the remnants of the army, taking advantage of every day’s respite for this purpose. Facts are stubborn things...the new terms are worse, more onerous and humiliating than the bad onerous and humiliating Brest terms, it is our pseudo-Lefts, Bukharin, Lomov, Uritsky and Co., who are to blame for this happening to the Great-Russian Soviet Republic. This is a fact...It is a fact you cannot escape, wriggle as you will.”

Field Marshall Hindenberg: “Lenin and Trotsky behaved more like victors than vanquished, while trying to sow the seeds of political dissolution in the ranks of our army.”

Lenin: “Intolerably severe are the terms of peace. Nevertheless, history will claim its own...Let us set to work to organize, organize and organize. Despite all trials, the future is ours” (*on the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk*).

Constitution of the Council of People’s Commissars: “Abolition of all exploitation of man by man, the complete elimination of the division of society into classes, the ruthless suppression of the exploiters, the establishment of a socialist organisation of society, and the victory of socialism in all countries” (*July, 1918*).

Lenin: “We shall destroy everything, and on the ruins we shall build our temple.”

Gorky: “We have survived the Romanov autocracy, perhaps we’ll survive Ulyanov’s” (*January 1918*).

Lenin: “We are building the new order out of the bricks the old order has left us”.

Josef Stalin: “Communists are as good at building new things as they are destroying old ones.”

Trotsky: “We shall not enter the kingdom of socialism in white gloves on a polished floor.”

Karl Radek: “We were always for revolutionary war. The bayonet is an essential necessity for introducing communism.”

Lenin: “Peace - this is a slogan of philistines and priests. The proletariat slogan must be: Civil War!”

Trotsky: “The revolution demands of the revolutionary class that it reach its goal by *all* the means at its disposal: if necessary by armed uprising, if necessary by terrorism. Terror can be very effective against a reactionary class that does not want to leave the scene. *Fear* can be a powerful resource in both domestic and foreign policy. War, like revolution, is based on fear.”

Lenin: “Long live civil war in the name of bread, for children and old people, for the workers and the Red Army, in the name of direct and merciless struggle with counter-revolution.”

Trotsky: “Soviet authority is organised civil war.”

Lenin: “We shall cleanse Russia for a long time to come.”

Felix Dzerzhinsky: “We need to send to the front – the most dangerous and cruel of fronts – determined, hard, dedicated comrades ready to do anything in defense of the Revolution. Do not think that I seek forms of revolutionary justice; we are not now in need of justice. It is war now – face to face, a fight to the finish. Life or death!” (*head of the Cheka*).

Lenin: “Much has been left in the world that *must* be destroyed by fire and iron.”

Dzerzhinsky: “The Cheka is the defense of the revolution as the Red Army is; as in the civil war the Red Army cannot stop to ask whether it may harm particular individuals, but must take into account only one thing, the victory of the revolution over the bourgeoisie, so the Cheka must defend the revolution and conquer the enemy even if its sword falls occasionally on the heads of the innocent.”

Martyn Latsis: “First you must ask him to what class he belongs, what his social origin is, his education and profession. These are the questions that must determine the fate of the accused. That is the meaning of the Red Terror” (*instructions issued to Cheka officials, 1918*).

Dzerzhinsky: “We stand for organised terror.”

Rozalia Zalkind: “We need pitiless, unceasing struggle against the snakes who are hiding in secret. We must annihilate them, sweep them out with an iron broom from everywhere” (*a Chekist*).

Lenin: “Is there such a thing as Communist morality? Of course there is. Morality is what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the working people around the proletariat, which is building up a new Communist society.”

Dzerzhinsky: “We don’t want justice. We want to settle accounts.”

Nikolai Krylenko: “We must execute not only the guilty. Execution of the innocent will impress the masses even more” (*the Commissar of Justice*).

Dzerzhinsky: “Our Revolution is in danger. Do not concern yourselves with the forms of Revolutionary justice. We have no need for justice now.”

Latsis: “The Cheka is not an investigating commission, a court, or a tribunal. It is a fighting organ on the internal front of the civil war...It does not judge, it strikes. It does not pardon, it destroys all who are caught on the other side of the barricade.”

Lenin: “A good Communist is a good Chekist at the same time.”

Fanya Kaplan: “I have long had the intention of killing Lenin. In my eyes he has betrayed the revolution. I was for the Constituent Assembly and still am.”

‘Krasnaia Gazeta’: “Without mercy, we will kill our enemies in scores of hundred. Let them be thousands, let them drown themselves in their own blood. For the blood of Lenin...let there be floods of bourgeois blood – more blood, as much as possible” (*Bolshevik newspaper 1st September 1918, in response to the assassination attempt on Lenin*).

Yakov Peters: “The bullet was directed not only against Comrade Lenin but also against the working class as a whole” (*a leading Chekist*).

‘Pravda’: “From now on the hymn of the working class will be the hymn of hate and revenge.”

Dzerzhinsky: “The sooner we get rid of them, the sooner we will reach socialism” (*on the bourgeoisie*).

Latsis: “The meaning of civil war: kill that you may not be killed.”

Lenin: “War is war. Guns are not just for decoration.”

Gorky: “A wholesale extermination of those who think differently is an old and tested method of Russian governments, from Ivan the Terrible to Nicholas II...so why should Vladimir Lenin renounce such a simple method?”

Lenin: “If we are not ready to shoot a saboteur and a White Guard, what sort of Revolution is that? Nothing but talk and a bowl of mush.”

Trotsky: “We must put an end once and for all to the papist-Quaker babble about the sanctity of human life.”

Lenin: “The intellectual forces of the workers and peasants are getting stronger in the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie and their accomplices, the intellectuals, the lackeys of capital, who think they’re the brains of the nation. In fact they’re not its brains, they’re its shit.”

Prince L’vov: “Bolshevism has found a fertile soil in the base and anarchistic instincts of the people” (*October, 1918*).

Stalin: “Proletarian revolution, awe-inspiring and mighty, is on the march through the world.”

Lenin: “We have been defencists since October 25, 1917; we have won the right to defend our native land. It is not secret treaties that we are defending, we have annulled and exposed them to whole world. We are defending our country against the imperialists. We are defending and we shall win. It is not the Great Power status of Russia we are defending – of that nothing is left but Russia proper – nor is it national interests, for we assert that the interests of socialism, of world socialism are higher than national interests, higher than the interests of the state. We are defenders of the socialist homeland.”

Trotsky: “The Soviet republic must have an army that can fight battles and win.”

General Denikin: “I can do nothing with my army. I am glad when it carries out my combat orders” (*commander of one of the ‘White’ armies*).

Trotsky: “An army cannot be built without repression. The commander will always find it necessary to place the soldier between the possibility that death lies ahead and the certainty that it lies behind.”

Captain Jacques Sadoul: “...a four kind son of a bitch, but the greatest Jew since Jesus” (*the head of the French military mission on Trotsky*).

Bruce Lockhart: “He strikes me as a man who would willingly die for Russia, provided there was a big enough audience to see him do it” (*British Consul General in Moscow on Trotsky*).

General Denikin: “I shall not fight for any particular form of government. I am fighting only for Russia.”

Trotsky: “We are fighting to settle the question of whether the homes, palaces, cities, sun, and heavens will belong to the people who live by their labor, to the workers, peasants, and the poor, or whether they belong to the bourgeoisie.”

Sverdlov: “Only if we succeed in splitting the village into two irreconcilably hostile camps, if we are able to inflame there the same civil war that had occurred not so long ago in the cities...only then will we be in a position to say that we will do that in relation to the village that we were able to do for the city.”

Lenin: “For God’s sake, use the most *energetic* and *revolutionary* measures to send grain, grain and more grain!! Otherwise Piter (*Petrograd*) may perish.”

Russian peasant: “We welcome Soviet power, but give us plows, harrows and machines and stop seizing our grain, milk, eggs, and meat” (*during War Communism*).

Trotsky: “Everything for the front!”

Russian peasant: “The land belongs to us but the bread belongs to you; the water belongs to us, but the fish to you; the forests are ours but the timber is yours” (*on the policies of War Communism during the Civil War*).

Lenin: “The kulaks are the rabid foes of the Soviet government...These leeches have sucked the blood of the working people and grown richer as the workers in the cities and factories starved...Ruthless war on the kulaks! Death to them!” (*Summer, 1918*).

Trotsky: “We Communists recognize only one sacred right – the right of the working man, his wife, and his child to live. We did not hesitate to wrest the land away from the landlords, to transfer the factories, mills, and railroads into the hands of the people...and, by the force of arms, to tear the crown from the stupid Tsar’s head. Why then should we hesitate to take the grain away from the kulaks?”

Petrograd graffiti, 1918: “Down with Lenin and horsemeat! Give us the Tsar and pork!”

Lenin: “He who does not work, neither shall he eat.”

‘Pravda’: “Where are the wealthy, the fashionable ladies, the expensive restaurants and private mansions, the beautiful entrances, the lying newspapers, all the corrupted ‘golden life’? All swept away” (*New Years edition 1919*).

Lenin: “We destroy in order to build better.”

Gorky: “Only the Commissars live a pleasant life these days. They steal as much as they can from the ordinary people in order to pay for their courtesans and their unsocialist luxuries” (*February, 1919*).

Lenin:

- “We do not recognize either freedom or equality or labour democracy, if they conflict with the interests of the emancipation of labour from the oppression of capital.”
- “You surely don’t think we’re going to come out the victors if we don’t use the harshest kind of revolutionary terror?”
- “The dictatorship means – take note of this once and for all – unrestrained power based on force and not on law.”

Grigory Zinoviev: “We must carry with us 90 million out of the 100 million of Soviet Russia’s inhabitants. As for the rest, we have nothing to say to them. They must be annihilated.”

Lenin: “The peasantry have some very deep grounds for dissatisfaction.”

Kronstadt sailors: “The autocracy has fallen. The Constituent Assembly has departed to the realm of the damned. The commissarocracy is collapsing. The moment has come for a true government of toilers, a government of soviets.”

Trotsky: “The pride and glory of the revolution...the reddest of the red” (*on the Kronstadt sailors*).

Kronstadt sailors: “By carrying out the October Revolution the working class had hoped to achieve its emancipation. But the result has been an even greater enslavement of human beings. The power of the monarchy, with its police and gendarmerie, has passed into the hands of the Communist usurpers, who have given the people not freedom but the constant fear of torture by the Cheka, the horrors of which far exceed the rule of the gendarmerie under tsarism.”

Lenin:

- “War Communism was thrust upon us by war and ruin. It was not, nor could it be, a policy that corresponded to the economic tasks of the proletariat. It was a temporary measure.”
- “The requisitions in the villages and the direct application of communist principles in the towns have hindered the revival and become the main cause of the tremendous economic and political crisis which descended upon us in the spring of 1921” (*on War Communism*).
- “...a man beaten to within an inch of his life” (*describing Russia*).
- “We are barely hanging on.”

Kronstadt sailors: “All of Soviet Russia has been turned into an all-Russian penal colony.”

Lenin: “Comrades, this is no time to have an opposition” (*at the 10th Party Congress, March 1921*).

Trotsky: “Only those who surrender unconditionally may count on the mercy of the Soviet Republic” (*to the Kronstadt sailors*).

Stepen Petrichenko: “Standing waist deep in the blood of toilers, the bloody Field-Marshal Trotsky opened fire on revolutionary Kronstadt” (*one of the leaders of the Kronstadt rebellion*).

Kronstadt sailors: “Lenin said that ‘Communism is Soviet power and electrification.’ But the people are convinced that the Bolshevik form of communism is commissarocracy plus firing squads.”

Serge: “It was the beginning of a ghastly fratricide” (*on the Kronstadt revolt*).

Lenin: “The lightning flash that lit up reality” (*on the lessons of Kronstadt*).

Serge: “We never thought that the idea of revolution could be separate from that of freedom.”

Lenin:

- “What is needed now is an economic breathing spell.”
- “Two steps forward, one step back.”
- “Let us retreat and construct everything in a new and solid manner, otherwise we will be beaten.”
- “Let the peasants have their slice of capitalism” (*on the NEP*).

Bukharin: “Enrich yourselves!” (*to the peasants during the NEP*).

Lenin: “The national economy must be put back on its feet at all costs. The first thing to do is to restore, consolidate, and improve peasant farming.”

Kamenev: “The New Exploitation of the Proletariat.”

Lenin: “Please don’t try teaching me what to include and what to leave out of Marxism: eggs don’t teach their hens how to lay!” (*debating the NEP*).

Bukharin: “We shall build socialism even on our impoverished base, we shall drag ourselves along at a snail’s pace, but we shall build socialism” (*endorsing the NEP*).

Zinoviev: “The New Economic Policy is only a temporary deviation, a tactical retreat, a clearing of land for a new and decisive attack of labour against the front of international capitalism.”

Lenin: “My wish is that in the next five years we will conquer peacefully not less than we conquered previously with arms” (*1922*).

Trotsky: “We can construct a railway across the Sahara, we can build the Eiffel Tower and talk directly with New York. But surely we cannot improve man. No, we can! To produce a new, ‘improved version’ of man – that is the future task of Communism.”

Lenin: “Electricity will take the place of God. Let the peasant pray to electricity; he’s going to feel the power of the central authorities more than that of heaven.”

Gorky: “I feel very tired: during the past seven years in Russia I have seen and lived through so many sad dramas – the more sad for not being caused by the logic of passion and free will but by the blind and cold calculation of fanatics and cowards...I still believe fervently in the future happiness of mankind but I am sickened and disturbed by the growing sum of suffering which people have to pay as the price of their fine hopes” (*Autumn, 1921*).

The USSR under Stalin 1924 - 1932

Lenin: “That wonderful Georgian” (*on Stalin*).

Trotsky: “The outstanding mediocrity of our Party” (*on Stalin*).

Lenin: “This cook can only serve peppery dishes” (*on Stalin*).

Sukhanov: “He produced, and not only on me, the impression of a grey blur, looming up now and then and not leaving any trace” (*on Stalin*).

Lenin: “Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary General, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that power with sufficient caution...Stalin is too rude, and this fault...becomes insupportable in the office of General Secretary” (*in his Final Testament*).

Stalin: “To lead the Party otherwise than collectively is impossible. Now that Illich is not with us it is silly to dream such a thing, it is silly to talk about it” (1924).

Zinoviev: “But we are happy to say that on one point Lenin’s fears have proved baseless. I have in mind the point about our General Secretary. You have all witnessed our harmonious cooperation in the last few months; and, like myself, you will be happy to say that Lenin’s fears have proved baseless” (May 1924, *addressing the Central Committee*).

Trotsky: “Right now he is organising around himself the sneaks of the Party, the artful dodgers” (*on Stalin*).

Stalin: “Socialism in One Country!”

Ryazanov: “Stop it, Koba, don’t make a fool of yourself. Everybody knows that theory is not exactly your field” (*on old Bolshevik criticizing Stalin’s attempt at arguing different points of advanced Marxist theory*).

Bukharin: “He is an unprincipled intriguer who subordinates everything to his appetite for power. At any given moment he will change his theories in order to get rid of someone” (*on Stalin*).

Stalin:

- “It is impossible to reduce the tempo! On the contrary, it is necessary as far as possible to accelerate it. To slacken the tempo means to fall behind.”
- “No, we refuse to be beaten! One feature of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered because of her backwardness.”
- “We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced counties. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they will crush us” (*on the introduction of his First Five-Year Plan*).

Party slogan: “There is no fortress that we Bolsheviks cannot storm!”

Bukharin: “Our salvation lies in our coming to an understanding with the peasantry. The question of the worker-peasant bloc is the central question. It is the question of all questions.”

Stalin: “Now we are able to carry on a determined offensive against the kulaks, break their resistance, eliminate them as a class and replace their output by the output of the collective farms and state farms.”

Bukharin: “We were conducting a mass annihilation of completely defenseless men, together with their wives and children” (*describing de-Kulakisation*).

Stalin: “A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths a statistic.”

Trotsky: “The grave-digger of the Revolution” (*on Stalin*).

Stalin: “...the champion with the faked muscles...the grandiloquent poseur” (*on Trotsky*).

Zinoviev: “The greatest political mistake of my life was that I deserted Trotsky in 1927” (1932).

Bukharin: “Our disagreements with Stalin are far, far more serious than those we have with you” (to Kamenev, 1928).

Zinoviev: “My defective Bolshevism became transformed into anti-Bolshevism, and through Trotskyism I arrived at Fascism. Trotskyism is a variety of fascism and Zinovievism is a variety of Trotskyism” (at his show-trial).

Bukharin: “...he is a narrow-minded malicious man – no, not a man, but a devil” (description of Stalin, 1936).

Zinoviev: “We were blind. Stalin is sly, perverse, cruel.”

Stalin: “Death solves all problems. No man, no problem.”

Trotsky: “Stalin, like Gogol’s hero, is collecting dead souls for lack of living ones.”

Stalin: “To choose one’s victims, to prepare one’s plans minutely, to slake an implacable vengeance, and then go to bed...there is nothing sweeter in the world.”

Kamenev: “I’ve been deceived” (after being sentenced at his ‘show trial’).

Bukharin: “He is the new Genghis Khan... He will strangle us ...He is going to drown in blood the rising of the peasants... He will slaughter us all” (on Stalin).

Stalin: “Our greatest goal was the universal triumph of Communism, and for the sake of that goal, everything was permissible – to lie, to steal, to destroy hundreds of thousands and even millions of people.”

Trotsky: “The Party in the last analysis is always right, because the Party is the single historic instrument given to the proletariat for the solution of its fundamental problems...right or wrong on separate issues, it is my Party.”

Bukharin: “Remember that the great cause of the USSR lives on, and this is the most important thing. Personal facts are transitory and wretched by comparison.”

Stalin: “Life has become better, comrades, life has become more joyous.”

Yekaterina Djughashvili: “Josef, what exactly are you now?” (Stalin’s mother).

Stalin: “Well, remember the Tsar? I’m something like a Tsar.”

Yekaterina Djughashvili: “It’s a pity you didn’t become a priest. You’d have done better.”

Trotsky: “For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth. Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence and enjoy it to the full (*Testament*, 27th February 1940).